



Bea Benaderet

April 4, 1906 - October 13, 1968

Los Angeles, California

Bea Benaderet, whose voice and comic timing carried American audiences from network radio into the first decades of television, died of lung cancer and pneumonia at Good Samaritan Hospital in Los Angeles on October 13, 1968. She was sixty-two.

Beatrice Benaderet was born in New York City on April 4, 1906. Her father, Samuel David Benaderet, a Sephardic Jewish tobacconist from what is now Turkey, moved the family to San Francisco in 1915 and opened a smoke shop that stayed in business for sixty-five years. Her mother, Margaret O'Keefe Benaderet, was Irish American. At eleven Bea played a bearded old man in a school play, and a year later a radio station paid her \$10 for a single performance. In 1926 she joined San Francisco station KFRC, where she acted, sang, wrote and produced, mastered a range of dialects, and worked as a female announcer at a time when that was a rarity.

She moved to Hollywood in 1936. On The Jack Benny Program she played Gertrude Gearshift, a wisecracking telephone operator, and on Burns and Allen she was Blanche Morton, Gracie Allen's loyal neighbor, a role she took to television from 1950 to 1958 and that brought her Emmy nominations in 1954 and 1955. At Warner Bros. she was the leading voice of female cartoon characters from the early 1940s into the mid-1950s, including Tweety's owner, Granny, and Witch Hazel in Bewitched Bunny.

Lucille Ball wanted her to play Ethel Mertz on I Love Lucy, but she was under contract to Burns and Allen, and the part went to Vivian Vance. In 1960 she became the voice of Betty Rubble on The Flintstones. She auditioned for Granny on The Beverly Hillbillies, watched Irene Ryan read and told producer Paul Henning, "There's your Granny," then played Cousin Pearl instead. In 1963 Henning built Petticoat Junction around her as Kate Bradley, the widowed owner of the Shady Rest Hotel, which she described as her first straight role.

She was entombed at Valhalla Memorial Park Cemetery in North Hollywood. Her husband, sound-effects technician Eugene Twombly, died of a heart attack on October 17, the day after her funeral, and was laid beside her. She has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame for her work in television.

Services

Died in Los Angeles, CA, October 13, 1968, aged 62. Portrait: CBS Television publicity photograph, 1966 (public domain), hosted by Notice Nearby.

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